

Licensure Process for an Arkansas Counselor or Therapist:

Summary: Arkansas requires that individuals presenting themselves to the public as a counselor or therapist providing services for compensation are required to secure and maintain a valid license. The Arkansas Board of Examiners in Counseling is the state agency responsible for licensing counseling and therapy. The minimum requirements for a license is a professional degree at the Master's level or higher in counseling and/or therapy with a minimum of 60 graduate hours completed with a grade of "A" or "B". The degree must have course work in the areas of Professional Identity, Social and Cultural Diversity, Human Growth and Development, Career Development, Helping Relations, Group Work, Assessment, Research and Program Evaluation, Abnormal Psychology/Psychopathology, Family & Relationship, Psychopharmacology, and 9 hours of Practicum or Internships (actually involved in providing counseling or therapy to clients).

The application process from graduation to license issuance usually takes several months. Applicants are encouraged to begin the process during their last semester of graduate school.

Upon completion of the degree, an application (with the \$200 fee) must be made to the Counseling Board, including an official transcript, summary of required coursework, 3 or more letters of reference, statement of professional intent to provide psychotherapy, and a plan for client records upon the incapacitation or termination of the therapist.

The applicant will be provided instructions and forms to request the results of a Criminal Background Check be sent to the Board office, when the application is received.

The applicant must take and pass either the National Counseling Exam or the National Marriage and Family Therapy Exam. The Board office must authorize the applicant to take the exam prior to the applicant making arrangements with either NBCC or AAMFT. Authorization to sit for the exam requires the completion of the minimum course work as indicated on the Required Course Summary:

http://abec.arkansas.gov/Licensing/Documents/CourseRequirementLAC_LPC.pdf or
<http://abec.arkansas.gov/Licensing/Documents/LamftLmftCourseRequirements.pdf>

Upon receipt of the passing scores, the applicant is scheduled for an interview with the Board of Examiners in Counseling. This interview constitutes the required oral examination, and must be passed before the applicant can be licensed.

The new licensee will hold either a License as an Associate Counselor (LAC), or a License as an Associate Marriage and Family Therapist (LAMFT). The new counselor/therapist is required to provide a minimum of 3000 hours of client contact in psychotherapy under the oversight of a state approved Supervisor. This period usually lasts about 3 years. Upon completion of the

3000 supervised hours, the psychotherapist is fully licensed as either a Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) or a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist (LMFT).

Maintenance of these licenses requires a minimum of 24 hours of continuing education (including 2 hours of ethics) for each licensing period.

Ways to speed up the Application process:

- File an application with the Board office before sending any other items (Either online or paper application)
- Apply at the beginning of the last semester of graduate school.
- Request an official transcript be sent to the Board office as soon as you apply.
- Request that an official transcript documenting your degree completion be sent as soon as you graduate.
- Take the NCE (and pass it) as soon as you are eligible. (or the MFT exam).
- Send a copy of your passing score to the Board office and request an appointment for orals. We must have the official score from NBCC or AAMFT before you can sit for the oral exam, but we can schedule you with some documentation that you passed. We sometimes schedule applicants two months out, especially around graduation.
- Request more than three letters of reference from professionals. I recommend requesting five or six, so that at least three will be sent in a timely manner.
- Find a supervisor before you sit for the oral exams. The supervision agreement is not valid until after you sit for the exams, but one must be on file in the Board office before you will be issued a license.
- Revise your statement of intent, if asked, and submit it quickly. This often delays the issuance of a license.
- Submit an Incapacitation or Termination plan before you sit for the oral exams. Submit it on letterhead. If you don't have a job, create your own personal letterhead, and state that you will submit another when you do have employment. Or, submit a plan as if you are in private practice.
- When in doubt, email or call the Board office.

The Arkansas Board of Examiners in Counseling has posted the requirements for Licensing on our website at: <http://abec.arkansas.gov/Licensing/Pages/default.aspx>

The Laws governing Counseling and Therapy in Arkansas can be found at:

<http://abec.arkansas.gov/aboutUs/Pages/LawsRulesRegulations.aspx>

Instructions for completing the Arkansas Counseling Licensure Application can be found at:

<http://abec.arkansas.gov/Licensing/Documents/licAppInstructions.pdf>

Instructions for completing the Arkansas Marriage and Family Therapy Licensure Application can be found at:

<http://abec.arkansas.gov/Licensing/Documents/mftLicAppInstructions.pdf>